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Appl. No. : 10/773,508  
Examiner : Ann M. Schillinger  
Docket No. : 15457.4018

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 3 without prejudice.

1. (Original) A method for treating a ruptured or degenerated spinal disc of a patient, comprising:

accessing an area adjacent an exterior of a spinal disc disposed between adjacent vertebrae;

and

wrapping a band of material around the disc to stabilize the disc in a desired position relative to surrounding anatomy,

wherein the accessing step comprises accessing an anterior region of the disc, and wherein the wrapping step comprises:

extending a distal end of an elongate member along a first lateral region of the disc around a posterior region of the disc to an opposite second lateral region of the disc;

connecting a first end of the band to the distal end of the elongate member;

pulling the elongate member back around the posterior region of the disc, thereby directing the first end of the band around the posterior region of the disc; and

securing at least one of the first end and a second end of the band to another portion of the band, thereby securing the band around the disc.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the band engages at least one of the vertebrae when the band is wrapped around the disc to substantially secure the disc relative to the at least one of the vertebrae.

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3. (Cancelled) The method of claim 1, wherein the accessing step comprises accessing an anterior region of the disc, and wherein the wrapping step comprises:

extending a distal end of an elongate member along a first lateral region of the disc around a posterior region of the disc to an opposite second lateral region of the disc;

connecting a first end of the band to the distal end of the elongate member;

pulling the elongate member back around the posterior region of the disc, thereby directing the first end of the band around the posterior region of the disc; and

securing at least one of the first end and a second end of the band to another portion of the band, thereby securing the band around the disc.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising adjusting a location of at least one of the vertebrae relative to the disc.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the adjusting step comprises:

engaging at least one of the vertebrae between tines of a fork member; and

manipulating the tines between the vertebrae to increase a space between the vertebrae.

6. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the adjusting step comprises subjecting the patient to traction.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising placing an extra-cellular matrix material between the band and the disc.

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8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the band comprises the extra-cellular matrix material on an interior surface thereof, and wherein the extra-cellular matrix material is placed when the band is wrapped around the disc.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the band comprises healing-promoting material for enhancing healing of damage to an annulus fibrosis of the disc.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the band comprises nonporous material, and wherein the band substantially seals any leaks in the disc when the band is wrapped around the disc.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the band comprises bioabsorbable material that remains around the disc until absorbed by the patient's body.

12. (Original) The method claim 1, further comprising applying energy to the disc to enhance healing of the disc.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein at least a portion of the band is electrically conductive, wherein the method further comprises coupling a source of electrical energy to the electrically conductive portion of the band, and wherein the applying energy step comprises applying electrical energy to the disc via the electrically conductive portion of the band.

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14. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the applying energy step comprises applying electrical energy directly to one or more desired regions of the disc.

15. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising inserting a tubular guide member around a portion of the exterior of the disc, and wherein the wrapping step comprises directing the band through the guide member to facilitate wrapping the band around a posterior region of the disc.

16. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising inserting a pair of opposite-hand tubular guide members around opposing lateral regions of the exterior of the disc.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the guide members are inserted around the disc until distal ends of the guide members are disposed adjacent a posterior region of the disc.

18. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the wrapping step comprises:  
directing a distal end of an elongate member through lumens of the guide members;  
connecting a first end of the band to the distal end of the elongate member; and  
directing the distal end of the elongate member back through the lumens of the guide members to direct the band around the posterior region of the disc.